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Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Letter dated 30 December 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a declaration by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on the inadmissibility of the desecration or destruction of places of remembrance and graves of Soviet soldiers in the Republic of Poland (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 70.

(*Signed*) P. **Iliichev**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 30 December 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Declaration by the State Duma on the inadmissibility of the desecration or destruction of places of remembrance and graves of Soviet soldiers in the Republic of Poland

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation expresses its profound indignation at the desecration and destruction of graves, tombstones, monuments and other memorials in the Republic of Poland commemorating the Soviet soldiers who gave their lives for the sake of that country's liberation from fascism.

Decisions officially approved by Warsaw to dismantle memorial sites, in conjunction with acts of vandalism committed by unidentified persons who, as a rule, go unpunished, have begun to typify the attitude towards places of remembrance and graves of soldiers and officers of the Red Army on Polish soil. To our country, which vanquished Nazism at the cost of colossal effort and millions of human lives, such actions are totally unacceptable.

In the view of the State Duma, this represents a direct challenge to the ideals of all the stalwart anti-fascists who gave their lives fighting to free the peoples of Europe from the Nazi yoke.

The deputies of the State Duma express their indignation at the ceaseless attempts to rewrite history by downplaying the contribution of the Soviet people to the defeat of Hitler's Germany and distorting the role of the Red Army in the liberation of Poland.

In 2015 alone, there were nearly thirty cases of desecration or destruction of Soviet memorial sites in the Republic of Poland. Yet the Polish authorities have not seen fit to comment on these sacrilegious acts of vandalism. Not a single statement by a representative of State authority condemning such actions comes to mind, and official investigations into these high-profile crimes have in many cases ended by exonerating those responsible.

The decision to remove the monument erected to a twice-decorated Hero of the Soviet Union, General I.D. Chernyakhovsky, at the site of his death in Pieniężno; the desecration by unidentified vandals of more than 50 tombstones and monuments on the graves of Soviet soldiers in the Milejczyce city cemetery, where some 1,600 Red Army soldiers killed on Polish soil are buried; and the dismantling of the monument to the Soviet liberator soldier in Mielec at the end of November 2015 should be seen as consequences of that policy. A few days earlier in November 2015, in the city of Garwolin, unknown perpetrators destroyed dozens of tombstones in the military cemetery, where more than 10,000 of our soldiers are buried. These are only a few examples of the outrages committed against memorial sites.

In the view of the deputies of the State Duma, the fact that these incidents have occurred in Poland in the year of the seventieth anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War of 1941 to 1945, and the end of the Second World War, denotes a particular degree of cynicism.

The State Duma draws the attention of the Polish leadership to the need to implement faithfully the agreement of 22 February 1994 between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Poland on graves and places of remembrance of the victims of wars and repression. The need "to honour their commitments under bilateral or multilateral treaties on the maintenance and conservation of monuments, including those containing the remains of foreign soldiers or war victims" is also highlighted in paragraph 9.5 of resolution 1652 (2009) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, entitled "Attitude to memorials exposed to different historical interpretations in Council of Europe member states".

For its part, the Russian Federation will honour all of its commitments to preserve and maintain places of remembrance and graves of Polish nationals (such as those in the Provinces of Smolensk and Tver) by ensuring the conservation and proper maintenance of graves, tombstones, monuments and other memorials.

The State Duma calls on the Sejm of the Republic of Poland to put an end to the war on monuments and memorial sites. Monuments, obelisks and tombstones of soldiers and officers of the Red Army who gave their lives for the liberation of Poland should be scrupulously protected by the State.

The deputies of the State Duma call on the Polish authorities to make every effort to find and punish the vandals responsible for these offences and to undertake the immediate restoration of the destroyed tombstones and memorials, which stand as testaments of profound respect for acts of military heroism.

The deputies of the State Duma remain staunch advocates of strengthening relations of friendship and good-neighbourliness with all peoples, and stand ready to continue to strive to ensure that Russian-Polish relations are based solely on a desire to cooperate fully for the benefit of our peoples and States.

S.Y. **Naryshkin**

Moscow
18 December 2015